

# Infant Interactions Through Caregiving Routines

Fairfax County Office for Children  
Institute for Early Learning  
Virginia Infant & Toddler Specialist Network

Fairfax County



Office for Children



# Routines

**For young children, routines are extremely important.**

Routines set the tone for the day.

Routines assure children that everything is okay.

Routines provide stability.



# Routines

Routines provide opportunities for interaction.

Routines create moments when close relationships can be developed.

Routines provide comfort.



# Routines

Routines are essential in an infant's day.

- Routines meet basic physical needs – the need to be cared for.
- Routines meet social needs – the need to interact with others.



# Routines

- Routines meet emotional needs – the need to be valued and to have loving relationships.
- Routines meet developmental needs – the need to learn about the world in a way that is appropriate for the child's skills and abilities.



# Routines

Caregiving routines make up about 80% of an infant caregiver's day. They are the core of infant care and a major part of the “curriculum.”

Rather than viewing routines as “something to get through as quickly as possible,” routines are opportunities to connect with each child in a nurturing way.





# Importance of Interactions

Interactions during routines create many opportunities to spend one-on-one time with a child.

- On average, an infant needs eight diaper changes per day x 365 days = 2,920 changes per year.
- In care for five days a week, there are approximately 1,000 diaper changes per infant per year.



# Importance of Interactions

- Rather than rushing through a routine, it is good to view the routine as a time to share an experience with a child.
- During routine times, we can tune into the child's responses and communicate with the child.
- Telling the child what is happening during a routine provides an important connection.





# Importance of Interactions

- During the basic routines of the day, meeting the child's immediate need is important for the child to develop trust in his caregivers.
- Slowing down each routine to take time to interact with the child creates greater awareness about the uniqueness of each child.



# Importance of Interactions

- By tuning into the pace of the child, we can meet the child's overall needs in respectful and fulfilling ways.
- By attending to physical, emotional, social and developmental needs, we can find wonderful moments to connect with each child.



# Video

Nurturing interactions with an infant.



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# Effective Caregiving

Effective caregiving means taking adequate time to get to know each child as an individual – understanding each child's behavior, body language, expressions and verbalizations.



# Effective Caregiving

Effective caregiving responds to the needs of each child in a way that is developmentally appropriate.





# Effective Caregiving

Effective caregiving works best if a primary caregiver has the major responsibility for a specific child (or a small number of specific children in group care).



# Effective Caregiving

As a child develops an attachment to and relationship with the primary caregiver, routines become easier and more comfortable for both the child and the caregiver.



# Young Infants

Routines for young infants need to be consistent, gentle and timely.

Responsive caregiving for young infants helps them learn **basic trust** in the world.



# Young Infants

Young infants learn that their needs will be met when caregivers respond immediately to their needs.

Over time, a young infant learns to anticipate the caregiver's response to the messages sent.



# Mobile Infants

Routines for mobile infants allow the child to **develop increasing competencies** in areas such as eating, drinking, washing hands, pulling up pants and similar tasks.





# Mobile Infants

Mobile infants may resist parts of routines – such as diapering – because they would rather be moving and exploring.

Caregivers can involve mobile infants in routines so that the children feel valued and begin to develop self-help skills.



# Older Infants and Young Toddlers

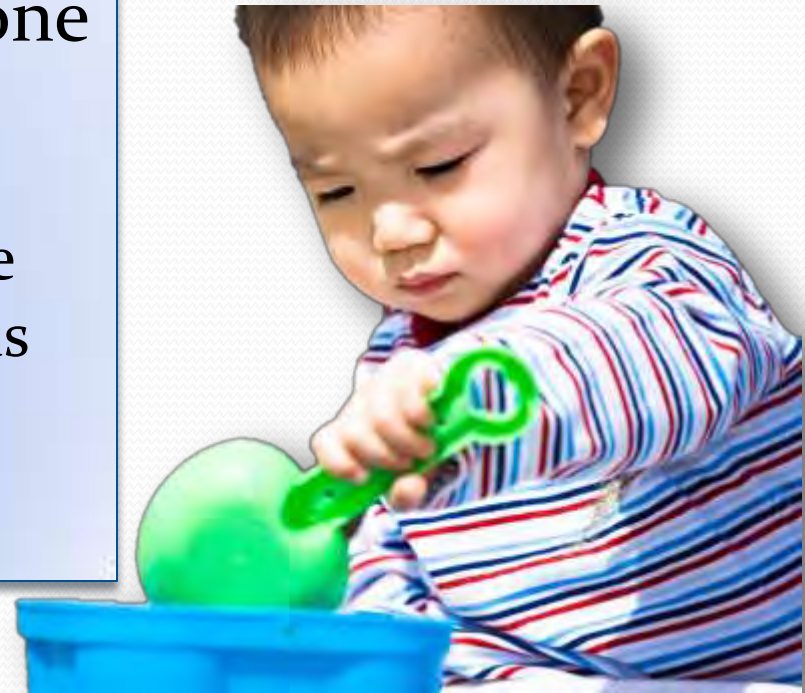
Routines for older infants and toddlers require attention to the child's **growing need for independence.**



# Older Infants and Young Toddlers

Children this age may fluctuate between wanting to be independent and having someone help them (being dependent).

Older infants and toddlers may be cooperative one time and not be as cooperative another time.



# Older Infants and Young Toddlers

Effective caregivers pay attention to the child's varying needs and involve the child in the caregiving routine.



# Basic Routines of the Day

Arrival – Greeting

Play – Exploring

Feeding – Eating

Rest – Sleeping

Diapering – Dressing

Departure – Goodbye





# Arrival - Greeting

- What kinds of interactions take place when a child arrives for the day?
- In what ways can caregivers create opportunities for nurturing interactions during this time?
- What does a successful **arrival routine** include?



# Arrival - Greeting

- Greet each child individually by name.
- Greet each parent by name.
- Greet each child and family member with a warm welcome and smile. This includes making eye contact and having a friendly, caring disposition.



# Arrival - Greeting

- Comfort a crying or distressed child during separation.
- Take time to gather and share child-related information such as:
  - How well the child slept.
  - When the child ate.
  - How the child is feeling.
  - Medication the child needs.
  - Anticipated pick-up time.
  - Special activities and more.



# Video

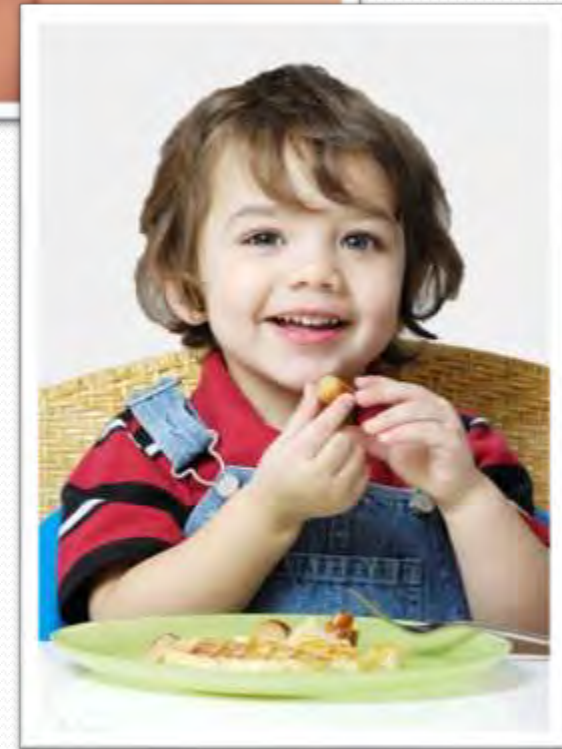
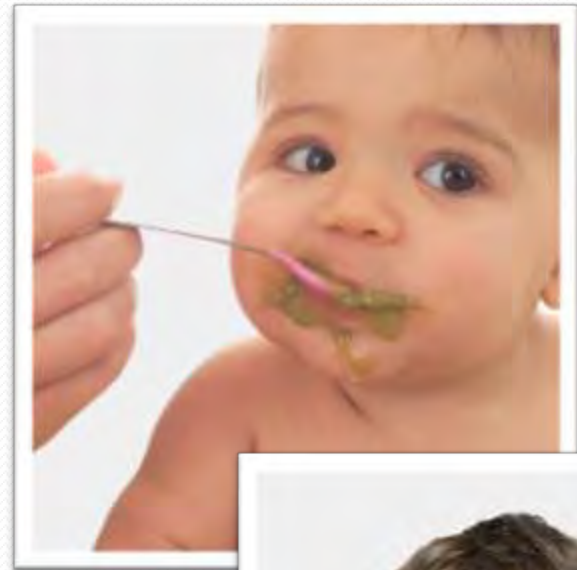
Nurturing interactions during arrival time.



Video used with permission of the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning.

# Feeding - Eating

- What kinds of interactions take place when a child needs nourishment, needs to eat?
- In what ways can caregivers create opportunities for nurturing interactions during this time?
- What does a successful **feeding or eating routine** include?





# Feeding - Eating

- Infant feeding is “on demand” - when the child is hungry.
- Always hold infants for bottle feeding.
- During bottle feedings, infants are held with their heads higher than their hearts and the caregiver can look into the infant’s eyes.



# Feeding - Eating

- Infants are comforted as they eat by being held close to the adult's body.
- The adult maintains a relaxed body posture while holding the infant for feeding.
- Adults hum, sing or gently talk to an infant during feeding times.



# Feeding - Eating

- Meals and snack times are relaxed and pleasant.
- Children are given plenty of time to enjoy their food and the process of eating.
- Well-balanced, age-appropriate food is served taking into consideration the child's likes and dislikes.



# Feeding - Eating

- Conversations between adults and children are encouraged while eating.
- Adults actively listen to the children when engaged in conversations while eating and use these times as one-on-one opportunities with each child.





# Diapering - Dressing

- What kinds of interactions take place when a child needs to be diapered or needs a change of clothing?
- In what ways can caregivers create opportunities for nurturing interactions during this time?
- What does a successful **diapering routine** include?





# Diapering - Dressing

- Pleasant interactions take place between the adult and child as the transition begins as well as during the diaper or clothing change.
- The adult tells the child what is happening throughout the process.



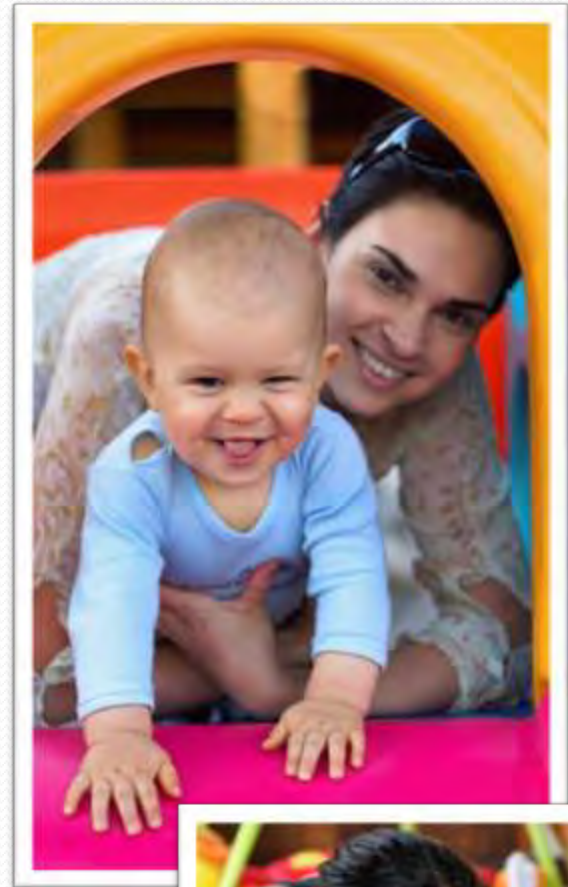
# Diapering - Dressing

- Diapering routines are predictable so that the child can anticipate and cooperate during diaper changing times.
- It is important to be aware of individual diapering needs.
- Remaining flexible and adjusting to the child's moods and level of cooperation makes this routine respectful and successful.



# Play - Exploring

- What kinds of interactions take place when a child plays or explores the environment?
- In what ways can caregivers create opportunities for nurturing interactions during this time?
- What does a successful **play routine** include?



# Play - Exploring

- Adapting to a child's pace, interests and learning styles helps to develop a strong and rewarding connection with the child.
- Supporting the development of a deep and trusting relationship between the adult and the child happens when the caregiver engages in play.





# Play - Exploring

- Promoting quiet exploration by limiting distractions and providing a safe environment allows the child to be curious and to develop play skills.
- Explaining or narrating for the child helps the child develop language to understand what is in the environment.





# Video

Nurturing interactions during play time.



Video used with permission of the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning.

# Rest - Sleeping

- What kinds of interactions take place when a child needs to take a nap or go to sleep?
- In what ways can caregivers create opportunities for nurturing interactions during this time?
- What does a successful **rest and sleep routine** include?



# Rest - Sleeping

- Nap times are scheduled appropriately for each child based on developmental needs.
- Individual schedules are maintained for infants (on demand).
- Toddlers are eased into group schedules.



# Rest - Sleeping

- Consistent and predictable routines are maintained.
- The environment is calm and soothing (e.g. relaxing music).
- Supervision is pleasant and warm.
- Nap is personalized with a crib, mat or cot in the same place and might include a special blanket or cuddly toy from home for toddlers.





# Departure - Goodbye

- What kinds of interactions take place when a child is picked up at the end of a day?
- In what ways can caregivers create opportunities for nurturing interactions during this time?
- What does a successful **departure routine** include?





# Departure - Goodbye

- As parents arrive to pick up children, greet each person by name (including siblings or extended family members).
- Greet each person in a friendly way and engage the parent in conversation, as appropriate. (e.g. “It’s good to see you.” “How was your day?” “How are you doing?”)



# Departure - Goodbye

- Explain to the child that the parent has arrived and it is time to go home.
- Help the child make the transition from the current activity to the parent by telling the child what is happening throughout the process.
- Help gather the child's belongings to take home.



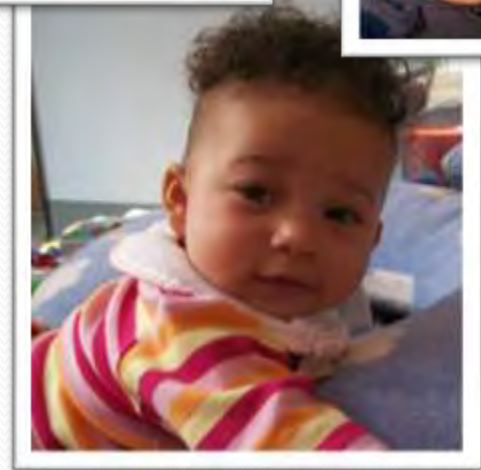
# Departure - Goodbye

- Share information about the child's day.
- Say good-bye to the parent and child. (e.g. "Have a good evening." "See you tomorrow." "Enjoy family time tonight.")



# Interactions During Caregiving Routines

By slowing down the pace and tuning into the needs of the child (or children) during every routine, we create wonderful opportunities to connect through nurturing caregiving moments.



# Resources

Infant/Toddler Caregiving: A Guide to Routines, The Program for Infant/Toddler Care, WestEd, San Francisco, CA

Foundations of Responsive Caregiving: Infants, Toddlers, and Twos by Jean Barbre, Redleaf Press, 2012

Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning, Office of Head Start and Child Care Bureau, Vanderbilt University



# Virginia Infant & Toddler Specialist Network

The VA Infant & Toddler Network is

*striving to achieve excellence in early care*

by increasing the educational level and skills of those who  
care for infants and toddlers,  
whether in family homes or in centers.



Infant and Toddler Specialists provide on-site services to strengthen early care and education programs that serve children from birth to 36 months.

These services include on-site mentoring, training and technical assistance.

The Northern Region serves Fairfax County, Loudoun County, Arlington County, as well as the cities of Fairfax, Falls Church and Alexandria.

For more information or if you would like to participate in this on-site mentoring opportunity, please email **[childcareclasses@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:childcareclasses@fairfaxcounty.gov)** or call **703-324-2165**.